

Removal of the jail tax 'sunset' provision eliminates community oversight from the use of our tax dollars without an effective plan in place to manage the growth of the jail population.

In recent years, the jail population has been growing at an unsustainable rate of 7.85% per year. A 2004 Department of Justice report on the Coconino County Jail stated, **"Expanding jail bed space, adding more police officers, court clerks, probation officers and/or jail personnel will not enable the justice system to catch up or out run work load growth. The growth must be managed, and it can only be managed collectively."** (www.nojailtaxincrease.com)

The report and several presenters before our committee made the following recommendations to reduce the growth of the jail population:

1. Focusing on pre-trial services, with the goal of reducing the length of pre-trial incarceration for those who will be released before trial anyway.
2. Implementing monitored pre-trial release.
3. Increasing consolidation of cases when defendants face charges from multiple incidents.
4. Improving the system of reminders of court dates and fines.
5. Increasing use of "time served" as a sentence.
6. Focusing on staff retention in all aspects of the criminal justice system, including pay increases.
7. Developing a much-discussed detox facility in Flagstaff.
8. Developing alternatives to using the jail as a facility for the mentally ill.

In 2005, Coconino County formed a Criminal Justice Coordinating Council to improve the criminal justice system. This collaboration is too recent to have reduced the rapid growth of the jail population.

The current tax does not expire for many years. Removing the sunset clause will remove an incentive to focus on improving the system. As a dissenting member of the County appointed Citizens Committee on the Jail Tax, I urge you to vote "No."

Maury Herman